

# The Relationships Between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction of a Courier Service Provider: Towards More Focus Approach

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to identify the relationship between reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and tangible towards customer satisfaction in one of the courier service provider in Shah Alam, Selangor. The methodology is based on customer satisfaction models with SERVQUAL survey input to investigate the relationships of the five dimensions towards the customer satisfaction. The survey data were collected via a convenience sample of the customers who visited the courier service provider at the targeted location in early 2018. To achieve the objectives, a multiple regression analysis is conducted to test the relationships of each dimension towards customer satisfaction. The study found that out of the five SERVQUAL dimensions, only reliability, responsiveness and assurance does have a relationship with customer satisfaction at the courier service provider. The limitations of the current study include the small sample size in which it should be conducted with a bigger population and several outlets of the targeted courier service provider. Further research may focus more on determinants factor in customer loyalty, improving service quality and performing cross-institutional benchmarking. For theoretical implication, it has added new knowledge to the literature of factors that affect customer satisfaction and led to new findings in which was found to be different from previous researches. For practical implication, it helps to give more awareness to the courier service manager to be aware of the problems in order for them to increase the service efficiencies.*

**Keywords:** *Customer Satisfaction, Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy, Assurance, Tangible*

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last 40 years, service quality measurement has always been the subject of investigation for many researchers (Anantharanthan Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985) . Service quality can be characterized as the capacity of a company to determine customers' desires effectively and to convey the service at a quality level that will at any time meet the customers' expectations (Brink & Berndt, 2009) . One of the

most well-known measures of service quality is the SERVQUAL, which is widely used in marketing and also in the service industry. The retail area was the main focus on the early investigations of service quality, where ten components were proposed to determine the general impression of service quality. They are reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communications, credibility, security, understanding customer, and tangibles. These factors are conceptualized on a 22-item gap-based survey instrument (Ananthanarayanan Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988) . The ten dimensions were later refined to five key variables (Ananthanarayanan Parasuraman et al., 1988) (El-Bassiouni et al., 2012): tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. SERVQUAL is conceptualized as a “perception-minus-expectations” service quality measurement framework (Anantharanthan Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1991) . According to (Høst & Knie-Andersen, 2004) , the five dimensions in the SERVQUAL model can be best described as follows:

- Reliability (the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately);
- Responsiveness (the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service);
- Empathy (the approachability, ease of access and effort took to understand the customer’s needs);
- Assurance (including competence, courtesy, credibility and security). Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence;
- Tangible (Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel).

Consumer satisfaction had been perceived as a focal idea of quality evaluation of service (E. W. Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994) . In spite of the consumer satisfaction beneficial outcomes, low perceived value caused the customers to switch into other competitors to increase their perceived value, which consequently leads to a decrease in loyalty (R. E. Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003) . A few studies have discovered that perceived expectation specifically and positively impacts customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Chiou, 2004) . These were supported by studies conducted by (Lin & Wang, 2006) , whose review inferred that wholehearted beliefs could prompt customer satisfaction and influence customer loyalty. Thus, the corporate image and brand image also stated to positively influence customer loyalty and customer satisfaction (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1997) ;(Raj G. Javalgi & Moberg, 1997). Moreover, previous studies have found that service quality is a strong determinant of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Buzzell & Gale, 1987) (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996) (Aaker, Kumar, & Day, 2008) .

The logistics industries such as the courier service involved in providing service to single customer or companies and it involved many parts. To provide a high quality and satisfying service to all, the courier service provider needs to fulfil the customer satisfaction. In relation to this, it is vital to identify the major factors that can influence customer satisfaction towards services provided and measure the effectiveness of SERVQUAL (Service Quality) Dimension application in a focused area. Furthermore, this study will also be beneficial to the organization because the management could give more attention to the factors that impact on the customer satisfaction by using the SERVQUAL model to improve their performance level. In this industry, customer satisfaction is a crucial element that any manager must focus on as it can influence the customer loyalty and profitability of the company. The relation between customer satisfaction and quality service is related to each other since customers will look for the quality service before they can be satisfied. However, if the customers feel dissatisfied it can give bad consequences to the company, especially on the percentage of the turnover.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In past decades, logistics have always been a supporting function for consumption and production. However, since the 1990s, the capacity of courier service leading to gain greater customer satisfaction and loyalty (Yang, Ho, Chen, & Chien, 2012) . Based on this statement, this study is conducted to identify the factors that lead to customer satisfaction towards the service quality provided by a courier service provider in Shah Alam, Selangor. To measure the customer satisfaction level, The SERVQUAL model from the Journal "A multiple-item scale for measuring customer perception of service quality" was used. By using the SERVQUAL model, the five dimensions named reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and tangible was identified to may have an impact on customers' satisfaction towards the services provided by the courier service provider.

### **Customer Satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction is a marketing term that measures how products or services supplied by a company meet or surpass a customer's expectation. Customer satisfaction is important because it provides marketers and business owners with a metric that they can use to manage and improve their businesses. As stated by (Høst & Knie-Andersen, 2004) , customer satisfaction is defined by how people realize they are satisfied until the request is fulfilled by the service provider. As writing does not give an interesting concept of consumer loyalty, this area withdraws with a clarification of how consumer loyalty is to be comprehended with regards to this investigation. When satisfaction of the customers was achieved, it automatically makes the customer become loyal towards the products or services.

Consumer loyalty has risen as a key variable in many firms, and it has been appealed to influence numerous other execution related factors (Bairi & Murali Manohar, 2011) . The scholarly writing states that consumer loyalty is a component of the disparity between a buyer's earlier desires and his or her recognition with respect to the buy (Alhemoud, 2010) . Consumer loyalty is, for the most part, portrayed as the full meeting of one's desires. Consumer loyalty is the inclination or state of mind of a client towards an item or administration after it has been utilized. A survey of the current writing demonstrates that there can be possibly numerous precursors of consumer loyalty, as the measurements of basic fulfilment judgements are worldwide as opposed to particular (Jamal & Naser, 2003) . Other than that, consumer loyalty is additionally characterized as either a general judgment of fulfillment or given a trait particular definition. The last depends on the supposition that fulfillment is the result of administration quality. There is a propensity towards measuring consumer loyalty at the general level while receiving the total perspective of fulfillment.

The most famous perspective of consumer loyalty in the scholarly world is that consumer loyalty is the judgment resulting from the correlation of pre-buy desires with a post-buy assessment of the item or the administration encounter (Alhemoud, 2010). Consumer loyalty can come about because of any measurement (regardless of whether it is quality related) and its judgment may emerge from non-quality issues (example: needs, value and impression of "reasonableness") and require involvement with the administration or supplier. Consumer loyalty is generally perceived as a key weight in the arrangement of customers' future buy goals.

## **Reliability**

Reliability relies upon dealing with clients' administrations' issues; performing administrations right the first run through; give administrations at the guaranteed time and keeping up mistake free record. Moreover, they expressed dependability as the most imperative factor in regular administration (El Saghier & Nathan, 2013) . Dependability likewise comprises of exact request satisfaction; precise record; precise quote; precise in charging; exact figuring of commissions; keep administrations guarantee. Additional specified that reliability is the most essential factor in managing services. Reliability is to effectively achieve benefit guarantee in an accurate way, for example, giving quick and secured exchanges, an extensive variety of items and administrations and open more counters at peak time. According to . Other aspect that need to be taken into consideration is speed of exchange , it is believed that the speed of exchange is the most critical thing impacting consumer's satisfaction (Janahi & Al Mubarak, 2017) .

Reliability also is observed to be one of the major service qualities. Reliability makes the organization more productive and positively reflects on the level of customer satisfaction. The customer expects more from the reliability for each service requested by them (Shahin & Chan, 2006). It is being explained well that reliability had a relationship effect on customer satisfaction (S. Alnsour, Abu Tayeh, & Awwad Alzyadat, 2014). In other words, customers got what they paid for the service and as a return, they raised their satisfaction towards the service quality. Related studies presumed that every one of the five of service quality is crucial (Zabed Ahmed & Hossain Shoeb, 2009). In any case, when respondents were solicited to rank the relative importance of service quality, reliability emerged as the most important of service quality, closely followed by responsiveness, assurance and empathy with tangibles as the least important.

## **Responsiveness**

Responsiveness refers to the willingness and ability of the service provider to meet and adapt to customers' needs. Thus, it is characterized by the eagerness or status of representatives to give benefit. It includes the convenience of administrations (El Saghier & Nathan, 2013) . In addition it includes seeing the needs and the needs of the clients, advantageous working hours, singular consideration given by the staff, thoughtfulness regarding issues and customers' wellbeing in their exchange. Previous study shows that responsiveness shows the highest correlation with customer satisfaction (Al-Weshah, Alnsour, Al-Hyari, Alhammad, & Algharabat, 2013).The trend is shown by which customers in retail sector reported the highest satisfaction for promptness and speed of service along with the accuracy of transactions at the cash counter (Naik, Gantasala, & Prabhakar, 2010). Employees should be trained and selected based on their ability to be helpful to give satisfaction to customers. The direct contact between the employees or the service provider and customer will increase responsiveness level. Responsiveness can happen among the service provider due to delays and distance. Long distances and delay in time processing in the supply chain can reduce responsiveness.

## **Empathy**

Empathy defines as characterized compassion as the minding and individual consideration the firm gives its clients (El Saghier & Nathan, 2013) . It includes giving clients singular consideration and representatives who comprehend the requirements of their clients and comfort business hours. Other researchers alluded to sympathy in their investigation as giving individual consideration; advantageous working hours; giving individual consideration; best enthusiasm for heart and comprehend customer's particular needs (Sureshchandar, Rajendran, & Anantharaman, 2002). Empathy was also found to have a relationship with

customer satisfaction. The customer was concern towards their needs and caring by the service provider, and therefore, appreciated that by expressing more satisfied with the services (S. Alnsour et al., 2014) .

### **Assurance**

According to (Anantharathan Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1998) and (El Saghier & Nathan, 2013) , assurance is a knowledge and cordiality of workers and their capacity to inspire and certainty. Assurance is when the service provider is expected to be good when delivery the services to their customers that can meet the expectations and feels satisfied. Understanding customers' expectation to fulfil their satisfaction is essential for conveying implicit performance since they are certain execution guidelines that customers use in assessing service quality.

Assurance includes the ability, kindness, validity and security. Learning and politeness of workers and their capacity to inspire trust and certainty (Shahin & Chan, 2006) . The company that delivers the services such as the courier service provider is a must to ensure that customers feel secure with systems and satisfied with the services at the same time. (Naik et al., 2010) , also found in their study that the customers in retail sectors were satisfied with the processing of transactions and efforts to expedite processing whenever the traffic at the counters increased. Results of the study conducted in retail banking sector indicate the four key dimensions of SERVQUAL (tangibles, empathy, reliability and security, and internet banking), all of which are significantly and positive effect upon customer satisfaction, their trust in the bank, and, finally, a bank's reputation (Hamzah, Lee, & Moghavvemi, 2017).

### **Tangible**

Tangible described as significant quality as the nearness of physical facilities, equipment, and so on (El Saghier & Nathan, 2013). Tangible also referred to significant quality as current equipment looks, up to date in term of equipment, agents are in vogue and materials are apparently captivating. Additionally, tangible can also be classified as the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials in the workplace and also found that tangible has a less significant relationship with customer satisfaction (Anantharathan Parasuraman et al., 1998) . Contradict result appears from above in which the tangible factor was significantly influenced not only service quality but also the customer's satisfaction in China's telecommunication industry (Noble, Sinha, & Kumar, 2002). Thus, it is supported by a report from a research applied, confirmed a strong and positive relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the electric utility service in Malawi (Chodzaza & Gombachika, 2013).

### **The Proposed Model**

The purpose of this study is the exploration of factors that lead to customer satisfaction towards service quality of a courier service provider in Shah Alam, Selangor. This study was to identify the relationship factors that lead towards customer's satisfaction between all of the variables. In relation to that, it is imperative to examine the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the courier service provider. It proposes to examine five sets of relationships:

1. Is there any relation between reliability and customer satisfaction in the courier service provider?

2. Is there any relation between responsiveness and customer satisfaction in the courier service provider?
3. Is there any relation between empathy and customer satisfaction in the courier service provider?
4. Is there any relation between assurance and customer satisfaction in the courier service provider?
5. Is there any relation between tangible and customer satisfaction in the courier service provider?

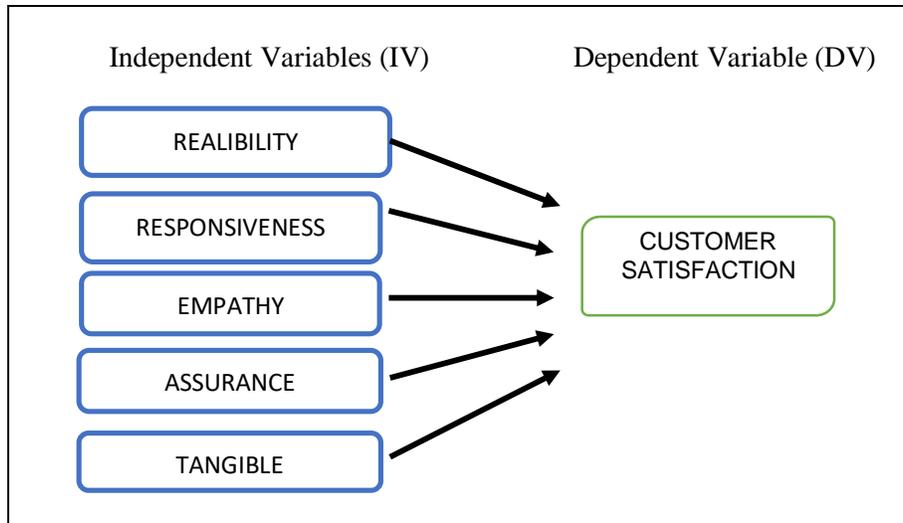


Fig 1: Theoretical Framework

Based on these five relationships, a model is proposed in Fig 1. This model predicts that service quality directly influences customer's satisfaction.

### Hypothesis

The objective of this study is to identify the relationships that exist between customer satisfaction and its prerequisite: service quality. To this end, five hypotheses have been developed, based on the five relationships identified in the previous section:

- H1: There is a relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction.
- H2: There is a relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction.
- H3: There is a relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction.
- H4: There is a relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction.
- H5: There is a relationship between tangible and customer satisfaction.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Construct Measurement and Reliability

This study was conducted at one of the courier service providers in Shah Alam, Selangor. The survey questionnaires were distributed towards 100 respondents that have experienced the services offered by the targeted courier service provider. The convenience sampling method was applied for sampling technique in this study. Questionnaires were distributed through the self-administered questionnaire. The quantitative research method was used in this research to show a clear relationship between both variables whether a positive or negative relationship. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. In section A, it will ask the demographic factor questionnaire of the subjects which consist of gender, age, income, level of education, marital status. In section B, respondents will be asked the questions that aligned with the dependent variable which is the customer satisfaction. Section C, there were five independent variables that represent the elements of quality service which are reliability, responsiveness, empathy assurance and tangible. Likert scale was used in all sections and the respondent is asked based on the level of agreement where; 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree. The data gained were analyzed step by step through the first stage; the reliability test and normality test and the second stage; multiple regression test to test the five hypotheses. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 17.0 statistical software.

## FINDINGS

### The First Stage: Reliability Test

To test the consistency and stability, the reliability test is applied. Cronbach's alpha is used to show how well the items positively correlated with each other.

**Table 1: Reliability test for Customer Satisfaction**

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| .693             | .681   | 4          |

Table 1 shows  $\alpha$  is .693. In customer satisfaction, Cronbach's Alpha score .693. Hence, we can see that the value of the alpha for this study was highly reliable and consistent to the study.

**Table 2: Reliability test for Reliability**

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| .988             | .988   | 5          |

Table 2 shows  $\alpha$  is .988. In reliability, Cronbach's Alpha score .988. Therefore, we can see that the value of the alpha for this study was very high and consistent to the study.

**Table 3: Reliability test for Responsiveness**

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| .995             | .995   | 5          |

Table 3 shows  $\alpha$  is .995. In Responsiveness, Cronbach's Alpha score .995. Thus, we can see that the value of the alpha for this study was very highly reliable and consistent with the study.

**Table 4: Reliability test for Assurance**

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| .982             | .982   | 5          |

Table 4 shows  $\alpha$  is .982. In assurance, Cronbach's Alpha score .982. Thus, we also can see that the value of the alpha of this study was very highly reliable and consistent with the study.

**Table 5: Reliability test for Empathy**

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| .976             | .976   | 5          |

Table 5 shows  $\alpha$  is .976. In empathy, Cronbach's Alpha score (.976) in which it indicates the value of the alpha for this study was very highly reliable and consistent of the study.

**Table 6: Reliability test for Tangible**

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| .965             | .965   | 5          |

Table 6 shows  $\alpha$  is .965. In Tangible, Cronbach's Alpha score .965. Therefore, the value of the alpha for this study was very highly reliable and consistent with the study.

## The Second Stage: Multiple regression analysis

**Table 7: Model Summary**

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .833 <sup>a</sup> | .693     | .677              | 1.87984                    |

R square indicates the percentage variance in the dependent variable that explained the variation of independent variables so R square explained in this study cover in the percentage. Table 7 shows the R square, the R square indicated how much this study presenting off. In this case, R squared for the model is 0.693 equivalents to 69.3%. Hence, our study has presented 69.3% and has balanced 31.7% had not studied yet and must bring to future research to study other variables related. Hence, it shows there are other independent variables which are not included in the study and if other independent variables include in the study it could strengthen the regression.

**Table 7: ANOVA**

| Model |            | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F      | Sig.              |
|-------|------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1     | Regression | 750.733        | 5  | 150.147     | 42.489 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|       | Residual   | 332.177        | 94 | 3.534       |        |                   |
|       | Total      | 1082.910       | 99 |             |        |                   |

For ANOVA in table 13, it shows that the P= (Sig.) value is less than 0.05 which is 0.00, thus the model is significant where F value is more than 1 thus it shows that three independent variables are an important predictor to customer satisfaction. The result was significant by F= 42.489, P = 0.000. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 shows that all independent variables significantly explained the dependent variables.

**Table 8: Coefficients**

| Model |                | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. |
|-------|----------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|       |                | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| 1     | (Constant)     | 14.292                      | 1.340      |                           | 10.667 | .000 |
|       | Reliability    | .291                        | .108       | .518                      | 2.695  | .000 |
|       | Responsiveness | .846                        | .288       | .426                      | 2.932  | .004 |
|       | Empathy        | .547                        | .430       | .127                      | 1.273  | .206 |
|       | Assurance      | .731                        | .284       | .382                      | 2.572  | .012 |
|       | Tangible       | -.411                       | .290       | -.218                     | -1.415 | .160 |

Testing of the hypothesis can be explained by alpha, beta and t significant value on the first correlation testing of customer satisfaction and reliability. This is explained by the results shown in Table 8. The significant t is stated at 0.000 hence, testing at 95% of confidence level. This study rejects the null

hypothesis. Hereby, there is a correlation between customer satisfaction and reliability as this result is similar to a study that was conducted by (Janahi & Al Mubarak, 2017) , (Shahin & Chan, 2006) , (S. Alnsour et al., 2014) and (Zabed Ahmed & Hossain Shoeb, 2009) .

The second correlation testing between customer satisfaction and responsiveness shows the significant t is at 0.004 thus, testing at 95% of confidence level. This finding also rejects the null hypothesis. Therefore, this confirmed the previous study's results reported that responsiveness has a significant relationship towards the customer satisfaction (S. Alnsour et al., 2014) (Naik et al., 2010).

Third, correlation testing between Customer Satisfaction and empathy shows the significant t is at 0.206 thus, testing at 95% of confidence level. This finding failed to reject the null hypothesis in which it reported that empathy has no significant relationship towards the customer satisfaction in the targeted courier service provider. Thus, it also contradicts the finding made by (S. Alnsour et al., 2014; Sureshchandar et al., 2002) that reported a significant relationship between empathy and customer relationship.

Next, correlation testing between customer satisfaction and assurance shows the significant t is at 0.012 thus, testing at 95% of confidence level. This finding rejects the null hypothesis and therefore confirmed the results reported by (Naik et al., 2010) and (Hamzah et al., 2017) that assurance has a significant and positive effect upon customer satisfaction. Last but not least the significant t value between customer satisfaction and tangible is 0.160 which signalled the value is more than 0.01 – 0.05. From the result of this study, it failed to reject the null hypothesis. Hence it contradicts to the results reported by (El Saghier & Nathan, 2013) , (Noble et al., 2002) and (Chodzaza & Gombachika, 2013) that tangible has a strong and positive relationship towards customer satisfaction.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

From the data acquired and the analysis that was carried out, it is clear that there is a significant relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction in the focused courier service provider. Based on the findings, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted because it was confirmed that there is a significant relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction. Therefore, it was in line with the previous study conducted by (Janahi & Al Mubarak, 2017) , (Shahin & Chan, 2006) , (S. Alnsour et al., 2014) and (Zabed Ahmed & Hossain Shoeb, 2009) where reliability is observed to be one of the major service qualities contributing the customer satisfaction.

Next is the relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction. The result shows that there is a significant relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction. Based on the findings, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted because it was confirmed that there is a strong relationship between the responsiveness and customer satisfaction. This finding thus supports the previous study conducted by (S. Alnsour et al., 2014) , (Naik et al., 2010) that stated responsiveness became the highest correlation with customer satisfaction.

On the other hand, it is confirmed that there is no relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction happen in the focused courier service provider. Based on the findings, it failed to reject the null hypothesis since there is no relationship between the empathy and customer satisfaction. This is totally contrary to the result gained by the previous study done by (S. Alnsour et al., 2014) and (Sureshchandar et al., 2002) where empathy was found to have a relationship with customer satisfaction.

Thus, for assurance variable, there is also no relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction happen in the focused courier service provider. Based on the findings, the null hypothesis is failed to be rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted because it was confirmed that there is a negative relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction. This contradicted the results reported by (Naik et al., 2010) , (Hamzah et al., 2017) that assurance has a significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction.

Lastly, for a tangible variable, it is clear that there is no relationship between tangible and customer satisfaction happens in the courier service provider. Based on the findings, it failed to reject the null hypothesis since there is no relationship between the tangible and customer satisfaction and this rejecting the studies by (El Saghier & Nathan, 2013) , (Noble et al., 2002) and (Chodzaza & Gombachika, 2013) that reported tangible to has a strong and positive relationship towards customer satisfaction.

## **CONCLUSION**

The current study has contributed to both theoretical and practical implication. For theoretical implication, it has added new knowledge to the literature of factors that affect customer satisfaction and led to new findings from the current study and have been found which to be different from previous research. This study also helped to verify where the current study found that there is a significant relationship between the dependent variable and all independent variables. For practical implication, this study helps to give more awareness to the manager to be aware of the problems in order to increase the service efficiency. It is recommended that the same study should be conducted on the bigger population. To achieve more accurate findings, the survey should be conducted with a large number of respondents from several courier service providers. As this study was only conducted in a focused organization, the result from the findings may be biased and not accurate for other courier service providers.

As for this study had been carried out, the convenience sampling technique was used because of the small number of respondents to investigate the relationship between factors that affect customer satisfaction towards service quality. Therefore, the random sampling technique should be used for the future study to get more accurate and reliable data. Thus, further research may focus more on determinants factor in customer loyalty, improving service quality and performing cross-institutional benchmarking.

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